ballblazer™
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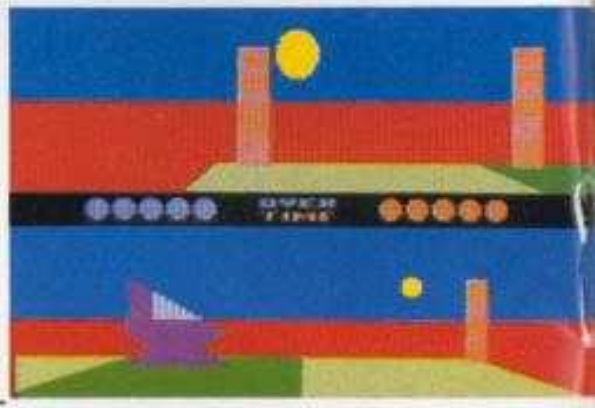
ballblazer: the simplest, fastest and most competitive sport in the known universe. It grew from dark roots in ancient space war to become king of all games among every lifeform within range of Interstellar ethercasting. In exactly three minutes, Ballblazer can make you a hero—or destroy a lifetime of dreams.

The year is 3097, and the place is a null-gravity nexus mid-space in the binary star system Kalaxon and Kalamar. Moments from now, on the luminous surface of an artificial asteroid, the final round of the Interstellar Ballblazer Championship—the greatest tournament of all time and space—will begin, and history will be made. For the first time a creature from the planet Earth has battled through the countless qualifying rounds and eliminations, enduring and then triumphing, across vast parsecs, to win the right to compete for the honor of his planet and the ultimate title any being can possess: Masterblazer.

QUICK START

You're playing the top screen. You have the ball, you're coming up on the Goalbeams, getting in position to score. ▶



Ballblazer: The Game

You're strapped in a Rotofoil. So is your opponent. The screen is split so you each have your own view of the game. You see your opponent's Rotofoil. Your opponent sees yours.

You face each other. One of you presses START and the ball is fired. Go for it and get it before your opponent does. Now find the moving Goalbeams and blast the ball through for a score. It's total speed, power and points—one on one until time runs out.

The one with the most points wins. It's easy to play—difficult to master. But go to Step One and find out for yourself.

1 **Insert the cartridge** for Ballblazer in your ATARI 5200 SuperSystem as explained in your Owner's Guide, and turn on the system.

2 **Plug controllers** into jacks 1 and 2. Use controller 1 to play the top screen.

3 **Demo Game:** Press the **0** key to watch demonstration games between Droids. Notice the split screen. Each half shows the view from one of the Rotofoils. Press any key to stop the demonstration. And remember: the Interstellar Ballblazer Conference strictly forbids betting on Droid matches.

4 **Select Game Options:** First press the * key. One of these options will flash: Top Player (Purple, left), Game Time (Middle), Bottom Player (Orange, right).

5 **Change the OPTION:** Press the # key to choose Human, Droid 1 through Droid 9, or to change the game time from one minute to nine minutes.

6 **Press START:** The ball is fired into the middle of the Grid.

7 **Push joystick forward:** Look at your half of the screen and keep moving forward until you reach the ball. Your ship will rotate if the ball goes out of sight to the left or right. Just keep moving forward and you'll get to it. (Jack 1 controls the top of your screen; jack 2 controls the bottom.)

You're playing the bottom screen. You see your opponent quickly approaching the Goalbeams with the ball.

8 **Take the ball:** Move forward—keep the ball in your view screen. Rush up to it. Your Pullfield automatically captures the ball and centers it in your view screen. Then your Rotofoil automatically snaps around to face your goal. You'll hear a sound and the ball will change to your color when you capture it.

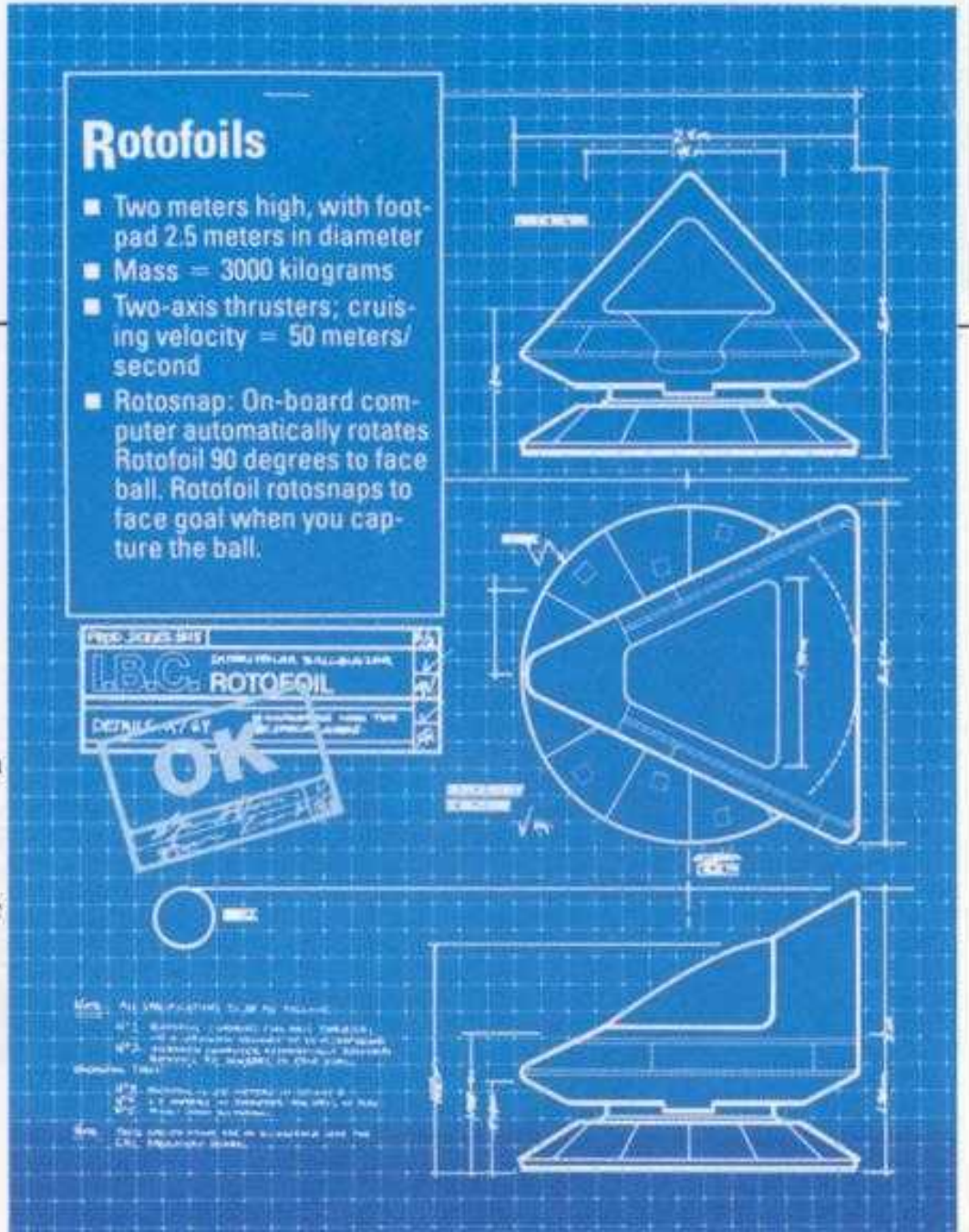
9 **Blast the ball:** Push any of your fire buttons.

10 **Steal the ball:** Go after your opponent, moving in from the side. When you hear a loud buzz, blast the ball away. Go after it—capture it.

11 **Score:** Find the Goalbeams. Line them up in your screen. Center. Fire. And blast the ball through the Goalbeams.

12 **Stop the game:** Press the **PAUSE** button. Press it again to resume.

13 **Reset the Game:** Press **PAUSE**, then **RESET.**


Rotofoils
Two meters high, with footpad 2.5 meters in diameter
Mass = 3000 kilograms
Two-axis thrusters; cruising velocity = 50 meters/second
Rotosnap: On-board computer automatically rotates Rotofoil 90 degrees to face ball. Rotofoil rotosnaps to face goal when you capture the ball.
I.B.C.
ROTOFOIL
OK

The Playfield

Grid

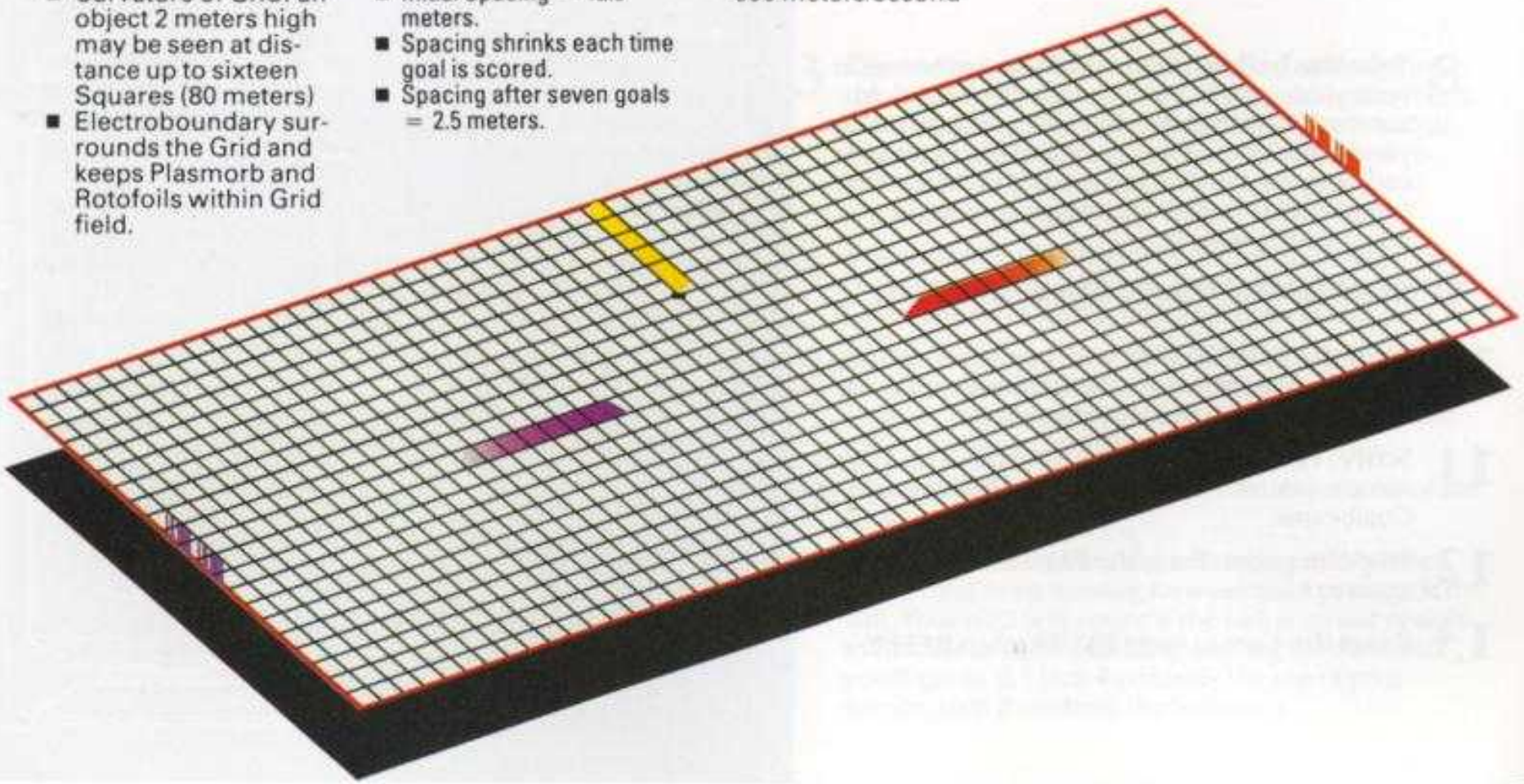
- One Square on Ballblazer Grid = 5 x 5 meters
- Ballblazer Grid = 55 Squares (275 meters) x 21 Squares (105 meters)
- Curvature of Grid: an object 2 meters high may be seen at distance up to sixteen Squares (80 meters)
- Electroboundary surrounds the Grid and keeps Plasmorb and Rotofoils within Grid field.

Goalbeams

- Pure energy, in visible range.
- One set at each end of Grid.
- Motion: approx. 5 meters/second.
- Initial Spacing = 12.5 meters.
- Spacing shrinks each time goal is scored.
- Spacing after seven goals = 2.5 meters.

Plasmorb

- Diameter = ⅝ meter
- Mass = 1000 kilograms
- Floats 2 meters above Grid
- Normal color: yellow
- Initial velocity = 450–600 meters/second



Welcome ladies, gentlemen and variants, to the final round of Ballblazer 3097. I'm Slan Sterling, the Voice of the Void, and ethercasting with me today is Arboster Kipling, one of the great Masterblazers of recent times, now Governor of the Omega Colonies. Arboster, welcome. We haven't talked since you purchased the Omega Colonies with your Tournament purse. How is it owning a planetary system?

Slan, it definitely beats working. On the other hand, there are times I'd like to be back in a Rotofoil, working the Grids like any other Blazer.

Arboster, this is the first time an Earthling has made the final round of the Interstellar. What are his chances?

Frankly, I think he's in trouble. These Terrans are a young species—they were barely out of their atmosphere when the game was invented.

Which was when?

Centuries ago, Slan, at the end of the Great Madness—back when there was still war. For deep space dogfights, you had to maneuver your vehicle under the incredible g-forces of close combat—reversing thrust instantly, sustaining plasma-torpedo blasts on your energy shield, that sort of thing. The g-forces during space combat would snap your neck like a toothpick.

And so a whole new breed arose, right? The thick necks, the shortened synaptic connections, the triple-walled lungs.

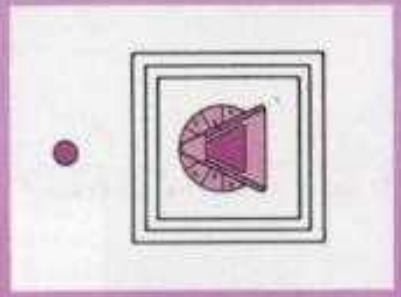
Exactly. Part of it was just old-fashioned genetic engineering, of course. But Ballblazing developed from actual military training exercises. They used vehicles like our Rotofoils, and forcefields to simulate sudden changes in direction and acceleration. Deadly stuff. They busted up ten recruits for every one that finally saw action in space. Praise Mind, the Great Madness is behind us, and what we have left is the finest sport of all time.

Crockett On Forcefields

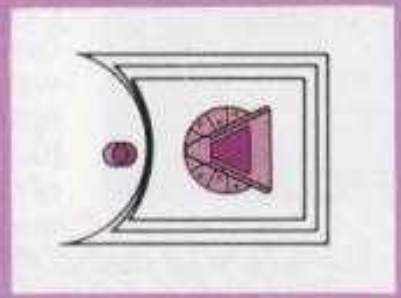
"Any Blazer who doesn't understand forcefields doesn't understand the game. Imagine that your Rotofoil is surrounded by a big pillow of energy—that's your **Bumpfield**, and objects, like other Rotofoils, bounce off it."

"When the Plasmorb gets close—about seven and a half meters—your **Pullfield** is activated. It's as if the pillow caves in and captures the ball. Of course, this is a *smart* forcefield—it centers the ball on the goal side, as your Rotofoil snaps around to face it. Then you're ready to charge downgrid and make a goal."

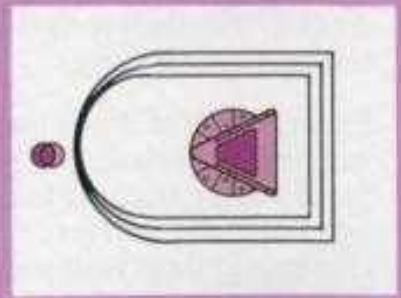
"Finally, you activate your **Pushfield** with the firebuttons. It's as if the big energy pillow is suddenly pushing out. It only works when the Plasmorb is within ten meters. You can tell when the ball is close enough to use the **Pushfield** by listening for the buzz."



Bumpfield surrounds Rotofoil.



Pullfield draws ball in and automatically centers it.



Pushfield blasts the ball forward. Rotofoil recoils backwards.

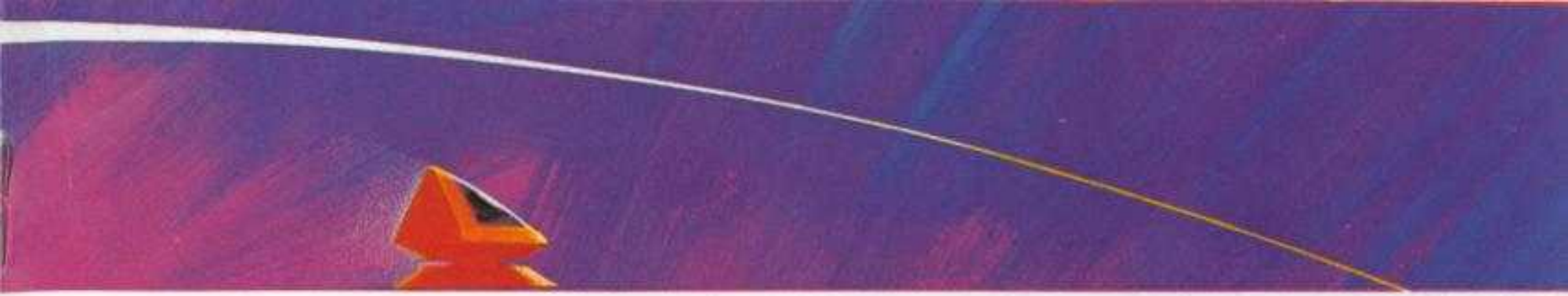
Is it true that a Masterblazer such as yourself has the most highly evolved nervous system of any creature in the galaxy?

Oh, gee, Slan, I don't know about that. The Scylliac venom hunters on Trogon—the guys who actually grab the fangs—those are pretty fast boys.

Modesty aside, Arboster...

(Deep sigh.) Well, Slan, Ballblazing isn't just a sport. It's deep discipline for the nervous system. When the onboard computer rotosnaps you ninety degrees, just keeping a clear head can be the toughest part of all. But it's worth it. Once you have the pace of Ballblazing, dealing with the rest of the galaxy seems like vacation.

Excuse me, Arboster. Here are the two Rotofoils now, vectoring onto the field. Crockett, from Earth, is in the purple, and Xarta, representing the Minotaur system, is in orange. In the background, we're hearing the traditional "Song of the Grid." That's auto-improvised, of course...



Based on the contributions of former Masterblazers. It is really an honor to hear my own melody in there among those of the other Masters.

The musical essence of Masterblazers of old is heard, as each Rotofoil takes its place, ready for the first face-off. And the two best Ballblazers in the galaxy are staring down the Grid, meditating on the "Song," waiting. Xarta attracted some attention, coming up through the preliminaries, didn't he?

Sure he did. That scaly Minotaur can shut out a Level 9 Droid in less than a minute. But beating a Droid doesn't mean you can beat a human. Wherever you go in the universe, there's only one regulation Ballblazer game—three minutes, two players, one victor.

Stirring words, Arboster—and here we go! The Plasmorb blasts in from our left, and both Xarta and Crockett are already accelerating downfield. Each had full stick forward even before the orb appeared.

All these boys are hearing now is that freeball rhythm, driving, driving...

All right! Crockett's Rotofoil has captured the orb in its Pullfield and now he's veering right, heading for the goal, trying to get around Xarta.

The goal is moving, of course, in the same direction as the ball is fired.

There you go. Crockett's sighted the goal but he's reversing direction, backing up, faking out Xarta. He's back to where the Goalbeams must have already disappeared over the horizon—but he blasts anyway. That's it! Three points for the Earthling with an early over-the-horizon shot!

And you do want to get those OTH shots in early, Slan, before the goal starts to shrink.

Arboster, you're often credited with perfecting the OTH shot.

Somebody had to.

OK. Here we go, second face-off, the ball blasts in from the right this time, with Xarta out in front. The Minotaur has it!—and his Rotofoil rotates to face the goal.

Sign of a good player here is not losing his orientation during Rotosnap. Move forward, forward...

But Crockett is catching up alongside him now—part of the Minotaur's Rotofoil power goes into that activated Pullfield. But Crockett's not using his Pushfield yet.

Good play. You want to get in close, really hear that electromagnetic buzz in your helmet before you blast. "Max the buzz," is what we teach the nestlings on my planets.

All right. Crockett blasts the ball away from the Minotaur, but Xarta recovers. Crockett is blocking but—there it is! Straight past the Earthling, into the goal, two points for Xarta.

Classic goal defense there by the Earthling—stay between your goal and the opponent. But it's no match for a good angle shot.

Arboster, we've seen some quick scoring here today.

That's right. These boys have been competing since age twelve. This is the Terran's chance to make a big splash in the galaxy, so a lot is riding on young Crockett.

And here goes the third face-off. Ball in from the right this time, the Rotofoils race down, and Crockett is there a microsecond before Xarta—but he doesn't immediately capture the ball. He's...

What we're seeing here is some fine Pushfield dribbling. Crockett knows that if he captures the ball he'll lose power, so he's keeping his Pushfield activated. Each time he gets near the ball, the Pushfield bounces it forward. Fine control there, by the Earthling. But he has to capture the ball to score.

There—he captures, swings the ball to the left of his view field and blasts—

—and misses. The ball bounces off the electroboundary to the left of the Goalbeam. Xarta accelerates, captures...

Crockett is already moving back. He's going to try a block midfield, but Xarta is out ahead.

The Earthling has the right idea—the key to active defense is to keep moving, keep moving...

Incredible! Xarta makes an angle shot, the orb bounces off the electroboundary and back into the Grid. He maneuvers around the Earthling, captures the ball directly in front of the goal—

—blast! blast!—

—and that's it! The horizon flashes with the scoring electromagnetic pulse, and that's another point for the Minotaur. Comment, Arboster?

That score looks close, but I think it's obvious that we're seeing an outclassed player here. I'd wager to say that a few hundred million hearts are sinking on Earth now.

As indeed there are. For the next two minutes, billions of Earthlings, scattered throughout their tiny solar system, hang on every word of the distant ethercast, hopes rising, then dimming, as face-off after face-off, Xarta from the Minotaur system holds the Terran to a handful of points.

Crockett On Offense

"Offense is ball control—learning the ways of the Plasmorb. At the face-off, have your stick forward, move out and capture the Plasmorb—it'll change to your color, and you'll rotosnap to face the goal. Don't blast the instant you capture the ball. Wait for the Rotosnap, get oriented, then head for the Goalbeams—they'll be moving in the same direction the ball was blasted in."

"Watch your screen. When the Plasmorb is aimed between the Goalbeams, blast. If you're in close, you get one point. Farther back, two. And if you can't actually see the Goalbeams—you get three. The Goalbeams narrow after each score, so go for two- and three-pointers first. If you get ten points, it's a shut-out. Otherwise, the winner has the highest score at the end of the game period. If you're tied, you go into overtime, and the next score takes all."

"Once you get the feel of it, try some angle shots. Let the Plasmorb swing to one side of your viewscreen, then blast—it will go in that direction. To get around a blocker, use an angle shot off-the-wall. Bounce the ball off the electroboundary, past your opponent's Rotofoil, then rush forward and capture it again."

"When you get good, try Pushfield dribbling. Keep your firebutton down as you approach the Plasmorb. Instead of catching it in your Pullfield—which uses 25% of your energy—just nudge the Plasmorb along in front of you. Then capture it when you want to blast a goal."

Crockett on Defense

"Even the best Blazer doesn't have the ball *all* the time. When you don't, you're on defense and then you've only got two choices: buzz-blasting and blocking.

If you're chasing your opponent downgrid, don't get directly behind him—jam in from the side to buzz-blast the ball away. Then you've got to grab that free-ball for yourself.

You know you're within blasting range when you hear the buzz. The closer you are, the louder the buzz, the better the blast.

The toughest part of buzz-blasting is knowing when you've rotosnapped to face the ball. Keep rotosnapping back and forth and listen for the sound of the Rotosnap—that's how you know you've changed direction. Then when you overtake your opponent you've got to remember which side you're on. It's easier to just do it, than try to talk about it.

Blocking is a tougher kind of defense—at least for tyros. It means situating yourself between the goal and your opponent. Keep him centered in your view screen. I usually know *telepathically* what the view is from my opponent's rotofoil. And I try to keep myself right between his goalbeams. You can do it, too.

Now, with fewer than fifteen seconds remaining, the Terran Crockett is behind nine to one and the face-off begins.

And here we go with the last face-off; the clock is running, the orb blasts in from the right. Look at that Earthling move!

He's captured the ball and rushes the goal—but pulls back—catching Xarta by surprise.

And there are the first notes of the final countdown...

It's an impossible long shot...

[LONG SILENCE]

Incredible! He made it! The horizon is flashing, the clock stops with just 2.5 seconds to run...three points for the Terran pushes his score back to four points against Xarta's six.

Slan, we're seeing history here. One more point and the score goes to five all. Then the game could go into sudden death overtime.

Face-off, the Rotofoils in front of their goals, the orb blasts in—600 meters per second—the Terran rushes and...

One second, Xarta has captured the orb. He's backing up, killing time—

And that's it! The clock hits zero, the Terran's Rotofoil spins out in the traditional loser's penance, the atmosphere over the asteroid glows with the orange color of the victor from Minotaur system.

One remarkable contest, Slan. I think...

Wait one microsecond. Xarta has remained on the Grid, to accompany the Terran Rotofoil off the field. It's a gesture I don't think we've seen in this tournament for centuries! Arboster?

It's a brand-new Masterblazer's tribute to an up-and-coming species, Slan. I'd say that we're going to be hearing more about Earthlings. A few millenia from now, these Terrans are likely to be real contenders.

Thank you, Arboster Kipling. This is Slan Sterling, Voice of the Void, returning you to your local ethercast. We'll see you here, next solar cycle, same place, same game. In fact, the only game: Ballblazer. Three minutes, two players, one victor!

Interview With Xarta

S: An incredible match, Xarta.

X: Great Mind, I'm a wreck. Where in the Void did this Terran come from?

S: Little G-class star, nothing fancy, just off the Main Sequence.

X: What a Blazer. His neurons must fire at warp-speed.

S: But not quite fast enough. Xarta, by Tournament law, you're now retired. Care to pass on a few tips to Blazers on the way up?

X: As long as it doesn't get back to the Earthlings.

S: Of course.

X: OK. Here's an old Minotaur trick for over-the-horizon shots. Shoot when you can still just make out the Goalbeams. The reaction of the blast knocks you back, over the horizon—and the score is based on your position when the Plasmorb actually passes through the goal. Best trick in the galaxy for turning two points into three.

S: How about the way you escaped the Earthling in the second minute?

X: Simple. I'm moving downgrid with the ball, and I know he's right behind me. I can almost see his viewing screen, with me right in the middle of it. So I blast. The ball goes forward and I recoil back right into him, blasting him back so I can get to the ball first!

S: Anything for close-in goal play?

X: Here's one I learned from Arboster. If you have the Plasmorb, but you're up against the boundary and need to move back to shoot, hold your stick forward and blast—you'll bounce back to three-point range, and you can catch the ball on the rebound.

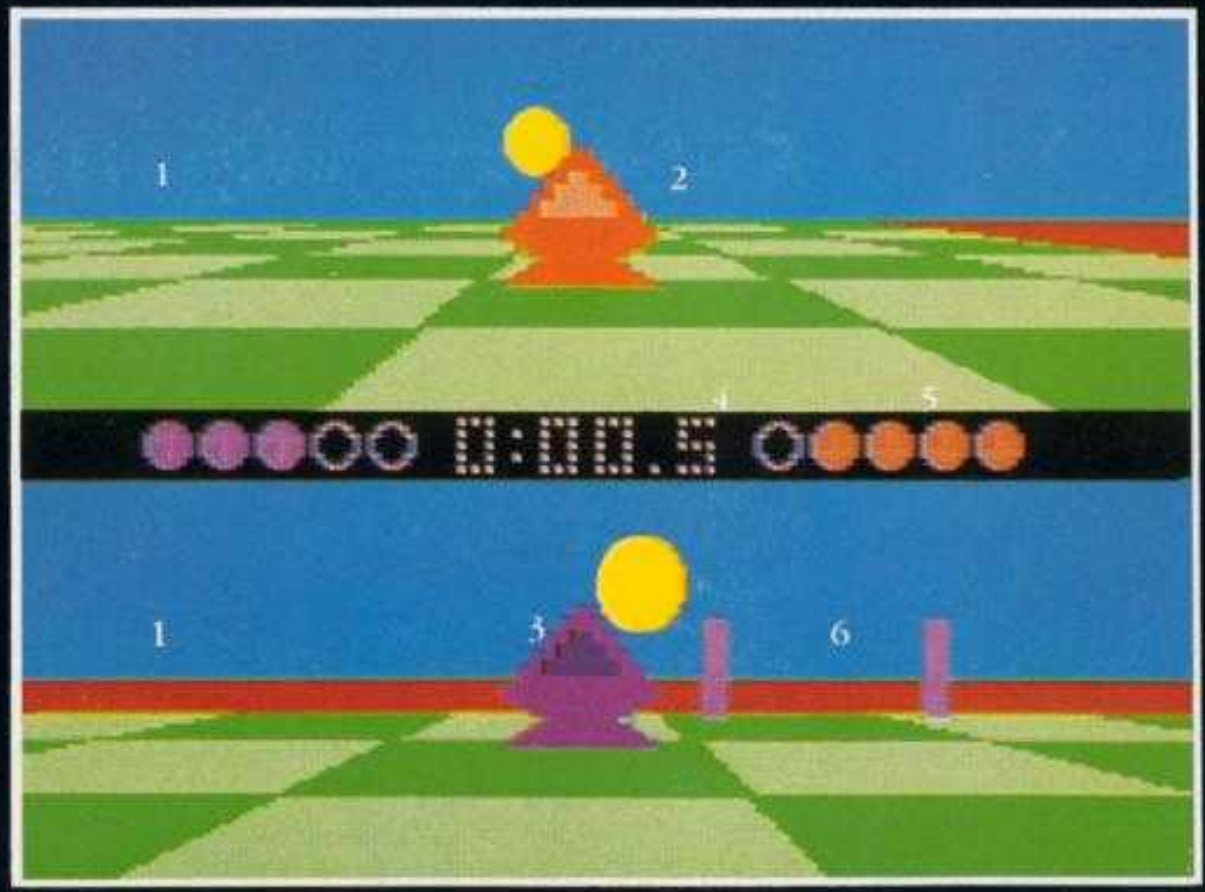
S: How about for tyros, just starting out?

X: Go out on the Grid, and practice aiming just outside the Goalbeams. The Plasmorb bounces back, instead of going through the whole goal sequence. You get more practice in a short time.

S: Anything else?

X: Yeah. Stay away from Earthlings. Something tells me those guys are really gonna be trouble.

ballblazer was created by the Lucasfilm Computer Division Games Group. David Levine created the concept, directed the project, and designed and implemented the screen graphics, physical dynamics, control structures, and mainline program. Peter Langston, the Games Group Leader, designed and implemented the sound effects and practice Droid intelligence, composed and programmed the music, and helped devise the game-play mechanisms and strategy. David Riordan and Garry Hare of Search and Design contributed game design elements and game rules. Charlie Kellner helped conceptualize game dynamics. Ideas and support were provided by other members of the Games Group: David Fox provided aesthetic support and Gary Winnick contributed to the Rotofoil design. Special thanks to George Lucas.



The screen is split so you each have your own view of the game (1). You've got the top screen, so you see your opponent's orange Rotofoil (2). Your opponent sees your purple Rotofoil (3). There's only a half second left (4). The score is four to three with your opponent in the lead (5). Your opponent has the ball and is quickly approaching the Goalbeams (6). But you're blocking the line of fire.